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Progress report of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the presidential statement of 25 July 2003 (S/PRST/2003/12) by which the Security Council requested me to submit by 30 November 2003 a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council mission to West Africa (see S/2003/688).

2. The report highlights the steps taken or envisaged in implementing the recommendations of the Security Council mission concerning Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The report also provides a preliminary assessment of practical ways of addressing cross-border issues identified by the Council's mission. I intend to submit to the Council a more comprehensive report on some of those issues in the coming few weeks.

II. Country-specific issues

A. Guinea-Bissau

3. On Guinea-Bissau, the Security Council mission recommended: (a) that the Council monitor closely the progress being made in the electoral process and that donors urgently consider providing financial and technical assistance so that the required electoral preparations can proceed and the polls held as scheduled; and (b) that the Council continue such collaborative initiatives with the Economic and Social Council in the area of peace-building in post-conflict countries.

1. Preparations for the legislative elections

4. Preparations for the legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau, scheduled for 12 October 2003, were well under way when a military coup took place on 14 September. Prior to that development, the President of the National Election Commission had cautioned that the electoral census could not be completed in time because of delays in starting the process. The census was also marred by reports of voter registration and voter-card fraud in some parts of the country.

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5. On 14 September, the junta-led Military Committee for the Restoration of Constitutional and Democratic Order issued a communiqué justifying the coup because of, among other things, the successive rescheduling of the elections, voter registration irregularities and statements by the Prime Minister early in September warning that a defeat of the governing Party of Social Renewal would lead to civil war.

6. On 17 September, an agreement facilitated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) between President Kumba Yalá and the Military Committee provided for a return of the military to the barracks, the resignation of President Kumba Yalá and the formation of a provisional government of national unity made up of civilians.

7. On 28 September, following the resignation of President Kumba Yalá, a Political Transition Charter was formally agreed upon and signed by the Military Committee, 23 of the 24 registered political parties and civil society organizations. The Charter provided for a transitional President, a transitional Government and a transitional National Council. The transitional President and Prime Minister were sworn in on the same day, and members of the Government took their oaths of office on 3 October. The Charter also provided that legislative elections would take place within six months of its signing, or by 28 March 2004, following which the transitional National Council and the transitional Government would hand over power to the elected People's National Assembly and the new Government. Presidential elections would be held one year later.

8. The transitional President and Government have publicly pledged to hold the legislative elections within the period stipulated in the Charter. For its part, the Council of Ministers is considering proposals to reinstate the Supreme Court, starting with the election of a new President and Vice-President of the Court. Meanwhile, the National Election Commission has resumed its work and is expected to finalize the electoral register in November 2003. On 9 October 2003, the Commission issued a communiqué recommending that the legislative elections be held by the end of January 2004, ahead of the 28 March deadline. This recommendation was supported by the main political parties, including the former ruling party and civil society organizations.

2. Pursuit of collaborative initiatives between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in the area of peace-building in post-conflict countries and donor support to the electoral process

9. In its report to the Economic and Social Council (E/2003/95) on a joint mission with the Security Council to Bissau, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group of the Council on Guinea-Bissau stressed that holding legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau was a high priority and that international assistance was urgently needed in that regard. In its resolution 2003/53 of 24 July 2003, the Council appealed to donor countries to contribute to the Trust Fund set up for the elections. It also welcomed the interaction and cooperation that had taken place between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, within their respective mandates, on the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

10. Since then, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group, whose mandate has been extended until February 2004, has continued to monitor closely the situation and has

maintained close relations with major development partners of Guinea-Bissau. On 17 November, the Group held a meeting at United Nations Headquarters with a high-level delegation of the transitional Government of Guinea-Bissau, led by its transitional President, Henrique Pereira Rosa, senior United Nations officials, representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and donor countries. The purpose of that meeting was to reassess the political situation in Guinea-Bissau and to discuss ways of providing support to the transitional Government as it prepared to hold elections.

11. On 18 November, in a private session of the Security Council chaired by the Foreign Minister of Angola, the transitional President of Guinea-Bissau appealed to the Council to mobilize urgent assistance for his country. The Council was also addressed by representatives of ECOWAS, the Comunidade dos Paises de Lingua Portuguesa, the chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group and a representative of the Secretary-General.

B. Côte d'Ivoire

12. Concerning Côte d'Ivoire, the Security Council mission strongly encouraged the President, his Government and supporters and all parties to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement (see S/2003/99, annex) should take the required steps so that the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration can proceed according to the plan. In this connection, the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) should pay special attention to the important lessons learned from a similar experience in Sierra Leone. The Security Council mission recommended that the Council should pay sustained attention to the implementation of the actions mentioned in paragraph 31 of the report of the Security Council mission, including: (a) the need to appoint Ministers of Defence and National Security; (b) to provide an equal level of security for all ministers, of whatever party; (c) to adopt an amnesty law to ensure both the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles and former combatants; (d) to extend government services and State authority to areas under the control of the Forces nouvelles; and (e) to accelerate the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, to disband the pro-Government militias and to terminate the activities of mercenaries. The Security Council mission also recommended that MINUCI soon receive its full complement of staffing, especially in such crucial areas as political and human rights.

1. Appointment of the Ministers of Defence and National Security

13. The announcement on 12 September by President Laurent Gbagbo of the appointment of the Ministers of Defence and National Security and their subsequent inauguration had appeared to indicate that the controversy between the President and the Forces nouvelles over this issue was resolved. Unfortunately, the Forces nouvelles rejected those appointments, claiming that the Government did not follow the procedure set out in the Accra II Agreement of 8 March 2003 (see S/2003/374, para. 28).

2. Security for political actors

14. At a special mini-summit of ECOWAS convened in Accra on 11 November by the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Seydou Diarra

agreed that an additional 80 gendarmes would be assigned to provide personal security to all political leaders. This agreement supplements several security guarantees adopted earlier by the Government with the concurrence of all the parties. Those guarantees include the assignment of a special police unit to protect the ministers and the establishment of a 50-person protection unit within the national gendarmerie with responsibility for the security of the ministers and the leadership of political parties. The protection unit is being financed by the European Union in the amount of 250 million CFA francs.

3. Granting of amnesty

15. As envisaged in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, the Government of National Reconciliation in mid-July 2003 submitted to the National Assembly a draft amnesty bill for its consideration. The draft bill generated intense debate in the National Assembly and widespread consultations among political forces and civil society. The bill was opposed by the Association of War Victims, which threatened to mobilize the human rights community against its passage in Parliament. Following consultations with President Gbagbo, it was clarified that the bill in question should grant amnesty only in respect of political acts against the security of the State. It excluded acts of economic crimes against the State and human rights violations. The bill that was passed into law on 6 August reflected this consensus. It also left open a window of two months for those who wanted to avail themselves of the amnesty law. On Saturday, 9 August 2003, the day after President Gbagbo ratified the law, 54 political detainees were released.

4. Extension of administration throughout national territory

16. As highlighted in my second report on the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (S/2003/1069), President Gbagbo and the Government of National Reconciliation have taken initiatives to extend central administration throughout the national territory. At present, well over 60 per cent of the national territory is under the control of ex-rebel forces (now the Forces nouvelles), who effectively precluded the establishment of the central Government's administrative presence. The implication is that the country is de facto partitioned.

17. To facilitate the extension of administration throughout Côte d'Ivoire, a National Reunification Committee was set up. In preparation for the deployment of administrators, President Gbagbo met with the corps of 952 administrators on 5 July 2003. Ministers also undertook missions to ex-rebel-controlled areas to sensitize local communities to the imminence of their reintegration into national administration and to assess the state of infrastructure on ground. Following the withdrawal of the Forces nouvelles from the Government of National Reconciliation, the Minister of Territorial Administration, Issa Diakite, a member of the Forces nouvelles, under whose jurisdiction the matter falls, has been absent from the meetings of the Council of Ministers. The extension of administration throughout the national territory has since stalled.

18. On 27 October 2003, following a meeting of the Council of Ministers under the chairmanship of President Gbagbo, the President established by decree a National Committee for the Redeployment of Administration. The Committee was described as an operational structure to facilitate the process of redeploying administration in the country. As a follow-up to the decree establishing the

committee, the President met with the corps of prefects to be deployed in the western provinces. As a result of this new initiative, 139 administrators took up their posts in parts of the western provinces in the first week of November 2003. Earlier, those areas had been cleared of armed elements through joint military operations of international forces and government forces (Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI)). It may be observed that some administrators, including those in the health sector and some students, have protested their deployment to the west claiming that there was no guarantee of their safety.

19. The Forces nouvelles have protested the deployments as tantamount to the use of force. It held an economic and social forum in areas under their control from 8 to 12 November 2003 and have also appealed to persons with administrative skills in the occupied provinces, including retirees, to report to the authorities to facilitate the administration of those provinces.

5. Acceleration of disarmament, demobil[illegible]zation and reintegration, dismantling of militias and termination of the activities of mercenaries

20. Prior to the stand-off between the Government and the Forces nouvelles over the appointment of the Ministers of Defence and National Security, several steps had been taken to enhance confidence among the parties, consolidate peace and stability and prepare for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. These include: (a) the creation of zones of confidence along the lines of the ceasefire; (b) the holding of formal and informal meetings between military commanders of the Forces nouvelles and FANCI; (c) the mounting of joint armed operations against Liberian armed elements in the west; (d) the formation of tripartite and quadripartite headquarters in Bouake and Bongolo respectively; (e) the identification of 17 cantonment sites for the movement of troops of both sides on commencement of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process; and (f) establishment of the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration.

21. Preparations for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, which were behind schedule, remain hampered by the decision of the Forces nouvelles to withdraw from the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and to suspend their participation in the Government of National Reconciliation.

22. Similarly, efforts to disband the various militias and to terminate the activities of mercenaries were hindered by the impasse of the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire.

6. Strengthening of the staffing of the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire

23. I am pleased to inform the Security Council that the necessary administrative and budgetary arrangements are under way for strengthening MINUCI staffing, in particular with the assignment of the authorized political and human rights officers.

C. Liberia

24. Regarding Liberia, the Security Council Mission recommended the following: (a) the ceasefire should be strictly adhered to in order to create a security environment that is sufficiently stable for the resumption of humanitarian operations and the negotiated settlement of the conflict; (b) the Council should not condone any

attempts to seize power by force; (c) the Council should consider authorizing an international stabilization force; (d) countries in a position to do so should consider rapidly providing financial and logistical support to ECOWAS and its member States to facilitate their deployment of a stabilization force; (e) humanitarian law and human rights must be respected by all parties; (f) the donor community should respond urgently to the serious and immediate humanitarian needs of the Liberian people; (g) the Secretary-General should consider appointing a suitably senior representative in Liberia at the appropriate time, suitably resourced; and (h) a United Nations operation in Liberia should promote close coordination between peacekeeping and peace-building, development and humanitarian programmes, perhaps through the appointment of a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (see S/2003/688, para. 47).

1. Implementation of the ceasefire agreement

25. The ceasefire is generally holding despite sporadic harassment of civilians in some parts of the country by all warring parties. However, during the second week of October, there had been serious fighting between the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Government of Liberia militia in Nimba County. The fighting was accompanied by serious atrocities against civilians, mainly by MODEL Krahn elements against the Gio ethnic group. Similarly, there have been skirmishes between Government of Liberia and MODEL forces in Grand Bassa and River Cess Counties and between the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Government of Liberia forces between Gbarnga and Ganta. These violations have been discussed in the Joint Monitoring Committee. Although the latter situations have stabilized somewhat, the situation in Nimba County is still volatile. While the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has conducted ground or air patrols to these trouble spots, its capacity to stop the violations is being seriously hampered by the lack of troops.

26. Some violations of the ceasefire agreements, especially the denial of access, have been prompted by the factional leaders' dissatisfaction with the inadequate response to their demands for government positions. During the third week of November, LURD denied an UNMIL patrol access to Robertsport on the orders of Charles Doe, Deputy Chairman of LURD, because he was not getting the ministerial appointment he had asked for.

27. The Joint Monitoring Committee, which is charged with supervising and monitoring compliance with the ceasefire agreement (see S/2003/657, annex), is now operational. It has already met many times under the chairmanship of the Force Commander and has addressed several issues related to violations, release of prisoners and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The Committee has also provided a useful forum to the parties to air their views and concerns and to exchange messages.

2. Preparations for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

28. A disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation action plan has been completed for 38,000 combatants, including 8,000 child soldiers and 1,000 female combatants. A National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation has also been established under the co-chairmanship of the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of

Liberia and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jacques Paul Klein. The Committee will hold its first meeting on 28 November 2003.

3. Stabilization of Liberia

29. On 1 October 2003, UNMIL took over from the Economic Community of West African States' Mission in Liberia, and has been since in charge of the situation in Liberia. Monrovia and its surroundings are secured, but the Mission urgently needs more troops to deploy inside the country so as to stabilize it.

4. Monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement

30. An Implementation Monitoring Committee has been established under the co-chairmanship of the Special Representative of the ECOWAS Executive Secretary in Monrovia and my Special Representative. The Committee held its first meeting on 28 November.

5. Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights

31. In collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations country team, the UNMIL human rights and protection component has been documenting cases of serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law, including information on perpetrators, victims and eyewitnesses alike. A central database has been designed for the systematic collation and storage of information from all human rights monitors in the field, which will facilitate future actions on impunity.

32. The assessment of the human rights situation and the collection of information on abuses and violations have also been complemented by efforts to strengthen the legal framework for the protection and promotion of human rights. Following the recommendation of the Special Representative, the Parliament of Liberia, on 8 October 2003, ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its First Optional Protocol, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. These documents provide a solid basis for international review of the human rights situation in Liberia and future responses to gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law. UNMIL has already prepared and widely disseminated among the various fighting forces a one-page international leaflet on the International Criminal Court as a deterrent against continuing human rights violations and abuses.

33. In order to consolidate the progress made in establishing a framework for action in the field of human rights, a draft human rights declaration was submitted on 29 October to the National Transitional Government of Liberia for consideration. The declaration, which was initiated as a tool for human rights advocacy, has already been adopted by non-governmental organizations and the United Nations agencies operating in the country. It establishes guidelines, benchmarks and priorities for collaborative national action in the field of human rights. Furthermore, in recognition of the important need to partner with national NGOs, the UNMIL human rights component, under the policy guidance of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has designed a series of training programmes on human rights and humanitarian law for personnel of national NGOs. The first such training session was conducted for 71 participants on 11 and 12 November 2003 and

covered human rights, humanitarian law, protection of internally displaced persons and vulnerable groups, as well as humanitarian assistance.

6. Donor response to the immediate humanitarian needs of the Liberian people

34. Donor response to the call by the Security Council for generous assistance for the immediate humanitarian needs in Liberia has been generally positive. The United States of America, for example, has donated more than $400 million to fund various fields of activity. On 20 November, a consolidated appeal for a sum of $137 million was launched in Toronto. The previous appeal, bolstered by a flash appeal, received over 50 per cent of the amount requested from the donor community for meeting serious humanitarian challenges.

7. Appointment of a Special Representative for Liberia and coordination between peacekeeping and peace-building, development and humanitarian programmes

35. As recommended by the Security Council mission, I have appointed a Special Representative for Liberia, Mr. Klein, initially to coordinate the operations of the United Nations system in the country and to support the emerging transitional arrangements. As members of the Council know, he is now the head of UNMIL. Mr. Klein is assisted by two deputies, who are entrusted, inter alia, with ensuring close coordination between peacekeeping, peace-building, development and humanitarian programmes.

8. Coordination with other missions

36. As also recommended by the Security Council mission, UNMIL is working closely with the other three political and peacekeeping missions in West Africa, the United Nations Office for West Africa, MINUCI and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), on cross-border issues. On 17 October, my Special Representative attended a regional meeting in Dakar called by my Special Representative for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, to finalize the draft recommendations on cross-border issues. On 14 November, Klein attended a similar regional meeting in Freetown hosted by the officer-in-charge of UNAMSIL, Alan Doss. The next meeting of heads of United Nations political and peacekeeping missions in West Africa is scheduled to be held in Dakar in February 2004.

D. Sierra Leone

37. Regarding Sierra Leone, the Security Council mission recommended the following: (a) the Government should intensify its efforts to develop the capacity of the Sierra Leone armed forces and police to ensure security when UNAMSIL leaves; (b) the Security Council should recognize the importance of the linkage between establishing peace in Liberia and consolidating stability in Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union subregion; (c) the successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Sierra Leone should be thoroughly assessed by the United Nations system; (d) the Security Council should examine the lessons learned to be drawn from UNAMSIL for the coordination of the United Nations peacekeeping, peace-building, humanitarian and development efforts; (e) the Security Council and other parts of the United Nations system should give careful consideration to the different roles women play in conflict and in subsequent

peacemaking and peace-building; (f) the Government of Sierra Leone should devote special effort to consolidating its control over the diamond-mining areas by ensuring that police and other civil servants are fully deployed there; (g) donors should respond rapidly and generously to the urgent funding needs of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and UNAMSIL should provide full cooperation to and support for the Court; (h) the local elections in Sierra Leone in 2004 should allow as much community representation as possible so as to reinforce the principles of inclusion and high standards of governance. The United Nations system should, with the cooperation of the Government of Sierra Leone, monitor the conduct of the elections carefully (see S/2003/688, para. 61).

1. Government efforts to intensify the capacity of Sierra Leone army and police

38. Although steady progress has been attained in the Government's efforts to assume responsibilities in the security sector as UNAMSIL draws down, much remains to be done. While the advances made by the Sierra Leone police are ostensibly more visible than those attained by the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces, both institutions need to enhance their operational capability as well as the ability to project it. In this connection, major requirements for enhancing the capacity of the armed forces include: (a) early completion of the construction of barracks; (b) upkeep and overall augmentation of the transport fleet; (c) improvement of communications equipment; and (d) acquisition of armed helicopters to maintain territorial integrity.

39. Similarly, in order to attain the strength and effectiveness necessary to assume its responsibility for maintaining law and order throughout the country, the police force should address the following needs: (a) accelerate and consolidate the training of recruits; (b) train officers in the middle ranks to manage the increased level of the force; and (c) support the construction of essential infrastructure to enable strategic deployment. The work plan of the United Nations civilian police for the coming 14 months is intended to assist the police force in carrying out those tasks.

2. Linkages between the establishment of peace in Liberia and the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone and the Mano River Union subregion

40. The interconnection between stability in Liberia and the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone is among the benchmarks upon which the decisions on the phasing-out of UNAMSIL are based. Visible political progress in Liberia and a more effective Republic of Sierra Leone armed forces presence along the borders would facilitate an orderly drawdown of UNAMSIL. Meanwhile, UNAMSIL and the Sierra Leonean forces continue to tighten their control over the border areas, with UNAMSIL troops in the eastern part of the country intensifying their patrols. In this regard, the implementation of Operation Blue Vigilance has contributed to the strengthening of their collective position. Similarly, UNAMSIL and UNMIL have established coordination mechanisms for cooperation in patrolling the border and in the orderly transfer of foreign combatants.

3. Assessment of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme

41. The reintegration programme is expected to end by December 2003. As a result, the focus has now shifted to broader community-based programmes. UNAMSIL plans to prepare a lessons-learned study from the reintegration

experience, drawing on the results of the evaluation of reintegration programmes, the programme evaluation carried out by the World Bank/National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and the independent survey conducted by Columbia University in July/August 2003. The study will, among other things, assess how the decisions made during the disarmament and demobilization phases affected the subsequent implementation of the reintegration phase. In the meantime, and in the light of regional developments, UNAMSIL has prepared an interim analytical report on lessons learned in the disarmament and demobilization process and in the ongoing reintegration phase.

42. Mechanisms for sharing lessons learned and for enhancing mutual learning have been implemented through the pre-deployment briefing provided to UNMIL and the ongoing close liaison between UNMIL and UNAMSIL. UNAMSIL and the executive management of the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Rehabilitation in Côte d'Ivoire are also exchanging ideas in the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

4. Lessons learned from the coordination of peacekeeping, peace-building, humanitarian and development efforts

43. As a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, UNAMSIL has placed special emphasis on coordination to ensure that its key activities are geared towards the attainment of the main objectives. Several lessons have been learned from the coordination of peacekeeping, peace-building, humanitarian and development aspects, including: (a) the crucial importance of keeping open the lines of communications with the warring parties; (b) the relevance and/or usefulness of the two-track approach to dealing with the Revolutionary United Front in implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; (c) the significant role played by the coordination mechanisms established following the May 2000 crisis, in particular the United Nations/ECOWAS/Government of Sierra Leone coordination mechanism that served the purpose of promoting a common understanding of the main objectives of UNAMSIL and developing a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of the mandate of the Mission; and (d) the importance of the information strategy and administrative support.

44. Proper coordination between the United Nations peacekeeping force and United Nations agencies also proved important for facilitating the transition from peacekeeping to peace-building and from relief and recovery to long-term development. However, in drawing and applying lessons, due consideration should be given to the specificities of the environment in which the peacekeeping operation took place.

5. Consideration of the different roles of women in peacemaking and peace-building

45. The promotion and protection of the rights of women is increasingly essential for facilitating their effective participation in peacemaking and peace-building. To this effect, UNAMSIL continues to mainstream gender in its programmes by promoting public awareness through the training of the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone police and members of human rights organizations. UNAMSIL has also established a Gender Task Force to support the participation of women in the promotion of peace and in decision-making. Furthermore, UNAMSIL plans to develop, in close cooperation with other United Nations agencies, a strategy to

facilitate the full participation of women in the forthcoming local elections. The Mission also plans to continue to advocate for the victims of the civil war, including supporting free schooling for children of amputees and other related needs.

46. However, the promotion of women's full participation in peacemaking and peace-building remains one of the primary responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone. It is therefore incumbent upon it to adopt national legislation to reflect all aspects of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which Sierra Leone has ratified.

6. Government control over diamonds

47. The Government continues to make progress in reasserting its control over diamonds, with the number of licences issued for diamond mining steadily increasing. The official exports in diamonds had reached $30 million at the end of October 2003, and is expected to surpass $70 million for the year.

48. A high-level steering committee, comprising UNAMSIL, donors and the Government, continues to support the Government in the management and governance of diamonds, including in the formulation of a national resource policy. In addition, UNAMSIL intends to continue to assist the Government in diamond mining in a number of ways, including: (a) participation in and support of the high-level steering committee and the National Security Coordination Group; (b) assistance to the Sierra Leone police in formulating and implementing a strategy for the policing of diamond mining; a diamond-policing consultant has been recruited while the recruitment of a diamond mining policing adviser is under way; (c) jointly patrolling mining areas and plotting grid references of licensed plots to help curb illicit mining; the fourth phase of the joint UNAMSIL/Government surveys was launched at the end of November; (d) offering public information facilities, such as Radio UNAMSIL, for sensitization campaigns and assisting the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in programmes to develop diamond area communities.

7. Donor support to the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

49. UNAMSIL continues to support both the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in keeping with the agreed memorandum of understanding and to advocate for the mobilization of adequate financial resources to meet their operational requirements. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in particular, may need additional funds, since its mandate has been extended beyond October 2003. Voluntary contributions to the Special Court amounted to $16,689,569 for its first year of operation, from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2003. Contributions for the second year of operation amount to $21,478,915, including several advances of third-year contributions from Member States. The contributions for the second year of operation of the Special Court are against an approved budget of $34,705,626. With regard to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the voluntary contributions for 2002 and 2003 amounted to $4,737,467.

8. Preparations for local government elections and United Nations assistance

50. Efforts to organize the local elections were long hampered by the heated controversy between the Government and opposition parties over the issue of whether those elections should follow a party or non-party model. While the Government favoured a party model, the opposition parties adamantly argued for the non-party model. There is now consensus that the Constitution stipulates that local government elections would be party-based and the local government act as now drafted states that parties and independents can contest elections for local councils. Pending the adoption of the local government act by Parliament, the National Electoral Commission continues its preparations, in close cooperation with UNAMSIL. It is planned to conduct a full voter registration exercise in February 2004 and local government elections in May 2004, although there are numerous challenges for the Commission to overcome before those milestones are met. On 5 November 2003, the National Electoral Commission addressed a letter to UNAMSIL requesting United Nations assistance in the organization of the elections. Following consultations between UNAMSIL and the Secretariat, it was agreed to dispatch an electoral assessment mission to Freetown in early December to enable the Electoral Assistance Division to determine the scope of and requirements for such assistance.

III. Cross-border issues

51. With regard to the West African subregion as a whole, the Security Council mission made the following recommendations: (a) the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa should undertake a comprehensive study of ways in which the international community can increase its cooperation with and assist in strengthening the capacity of ECOWAS; (b) measures should be adopted to strengthen the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms and light weapons; (c) the United Nations Office for West Africa should be strengthened; (d) international support should be mobilized for the reactivation of the Mano River Union; (e) donors should provide support to security sector reform; (f) the parties must combat the recruitment of mercenaries and child soldiers; (g) children and women must be protected against sexual violence and exploitation; (h) a practical and regional approach to the problem of youth unemployment must be developed (see S/2003/688, paras. 62-76).

1. Strengthening of cooperation with and the capacity of the Economic Community of West African States

52. My Special Representative is currently engaged in extensive consultations with various partners both within and outside the United Nations system, in particular ECOWAS, on practical ways of strengthening cooperation with and support for ECOWAS. In this connection, a joint UNDP/United Nations Office for West Africa/European Commission mission will shortly visit ECOWAS headquarters in Abuja and the four zonal observation and monitoring bureaux in order to undertake an assessment of the capacity of ECOWAS in the areas of early warning, conflict prevention, and peace-building. The joint mission will make recommendations on ways to enhance the effectiveness of ECOWAS through external assistance and structural improvements. This will be one of the key elements in the preparation of the study by the Office requested by the Security Council mission, which will cover

all priority areas on the ECOWAS agenda and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2004.

53. In addition, the Office plans to interact more systematically with the ECOWAS secretariat, especially during the preparation and subsequent implementation of the recommendations on ways of strengthening cooperation with and assistance to ECOWAS. A focal point for ECOWAS matters will be designated within the Office to that effect.

2. Strengthening the moratorium on small arms and light weapons

54. Effective control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa would require a framework of cooperation and coordination between ECOWAS, the United Nations political and peacekeeping missions and arms producers and exporters. At the same time, the international community should initiate the adoption of regional and international measures to address one of the principal causes of continuing violence in West Africa, namely, the tendency of certain Governments in the subregion to flout their international and regional responsibilities (including the ECOWAS Protocol of 1978 and the moratorium of 1998) by promoting civil strife in neighbouring countries.

55. Pending the submission of specific recommendations on how best to strengthen the ECOWAS moratorium on small arms and light weapons, I have asked my Special Representative for West Africa to explore with ECOWAS possible areas of cooperation between the United Nations and the ECOWAS secretariat in addressing the major challenges confronting the implementation of the moratorium.

56. Pursuant to presidential statement S/PRST/2003/11 of 25 July, I will soon submit to the Council a separate report on such cross-border issues as the use of mercenaries and child soldiers and the spread of small arms.

3. Strengthening of the United Nations Office for West Africa

57. The current staffing table of the Office comprises seven Professionals, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. In order to be able to carry out effectively the extensive and very wide-ranging tasks that have recently been entrusted to it, the Office would require additional human and material resources. Therefore, pending a formal review of the performance and additional requirements of the Office, I intend to request other United Nations entities operating in West Africa, as well as donors, to explore possibilities for cooperation with the Office, including the secondment of staff for specific projects.

4. Mobilizing support for the reactivation of the Mano River Union

58. Over the past few months, encouraging prospects have developed that bode well for the reactivation of the Mano River Union. These include a smooth political transition in Liberia, the deployment of a United Nations mission in that country and the recent goodwill visits to Guinea and Sierra Leone by the Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia. To maintain the momentum generated by those developments, it is essential to buttress efforts towards the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone and the effective implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement signed on 18 August 2003 by the Liberian parties. At the same time, the United Nations should encourage Guinea to pursue its initiative to convene a

ministerial meeting of the Mano River Union member States aimed at defining a political framework for the revival of the Union. My upcoming report to the Council on certain cross-border issues will also include specific measures to help revitalize the Mano River Union.

5. Donor support to security sector reform

59. In order to attract donor focus to supporting security sector reform, my Special Representative for West Africa plans to organize in Dakar next year, in cooperation with ECOWAS, a meeting of defence and interior ministers of a number of West African countries, plus other participants. The purpose of the meeting will be twofold: first, to develop a common understanding of the importance of security sector reform in the context of consolidating national and regional peace and stability; and second, to explore the possibility of formulating specific security sector reform projects that could be submitted to potential donors for funding.

60. Furthermore, I intend to ask the United Nations Office for West Africa to prepare a study on practical ways of promoting security sector reform in West Africa. In addition, there is a need for the relevant United Nations entities to explore the possibility of developing a general framework for regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

6. Combating the use of mercenaries and child soldiers

61. As indicated above, I intend to submit to the Council in the coming few weeks a report on some of the cross-border issues that will also address the question of mercenaries and child soldiers.

7. Protection of children and women against sexual violence and exploitation

62. I have requested all my representatives in the subregion to continue to give high priority to mainstreaming protection of children and women against sexual violence and exploitation in their activities, particularly in peacekeeping operations. I have also asked them to indicate all practical measures that they have taken or envisaged in addressing this issue.

8. Regional approach to youth unemployment

63. As expressly requested by the Security Council mission, the United Nations Office for West Africa will soon submit a comprehensive report on the question of youth unemployment, focusing on lessons learned from peacekeeping and peace-building missions in addressing that issue, as well as on the possibilities of cooperation between the United Nations system and national and regional institutions.

IV. Observations

64. Appreciable progress has been achieved in implementing the recommendations of the Security Council mission concerning Sierra Leone and Liberia. In the case of Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire, it is hoped that the recent initiatives taken by ECOWAS and other international players will help these two countries take the steps necessary to achieve sustainable peace and stability. Encouraging steps have also

been taken to address the cross-cutting regional issues. However, several obstacles still stand in the way of efforts to stabilize the West African subregion and promote good governance and development.

65. The declared commitment of the newly formed transitional Government of Guinea- Bissau to restore legality and hold legislative elections by the end of March 2004 is a welcome development. In order to maintain the momentum generated by this commitment, it is essential that, as called for by the Security Council, the international community remain fully engaged with Guinea-Bissau, including by providing urgent financial and other support to help the authorities follow through on their commitments.

66. Regrettably, the significant progress made in the Ivorian peace process until August this year has been interrupted by the recent stand-off between the Government and the Forces nouvelles over the procedure followed in the appointment of the Ministers of Defence and National Security. If allowed to continue, this situation could dangerously consolidate the de facto partition of the country with unpredictable consequences for the stability of Côte d'Ivoire as well as of neighbouring countries. In this connection, I wish to pay tribute to ECOWAS leaders and other international partners for the constructive role they continue to play to help overcome the deadlock of the Ivorian peace process. I also call upon the Ivorian parties to recommit themselves to implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement effectively and fully, in particular to facilitate the operation of the Government of National Reconciliation with the participation of all signatories. This would help to secure the continued support of the international community for the peace process. At the same time, it is my fervent hope that members of the Security Council will give full consideration to the pressing call by ECOWAS leaders for an increase in the troop strength of MINUCI and for its transformation into a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

67. The early and resolute steps taken towards the implementation of the Liberian peace process augur well not only for the stability of the country but also for the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. However, stabilizing Liberia remains a challenge and is contingent upon the timely mobilization and deployment of the required troops throughout the country, especially as UNMIL begins to disarm and demobilize combatants, which represents a critical stage in the peace process. Members of the Council may therefore wish to call upon those Member States that had promised troops for UNMIL to redeem their pledges as soon as possible. I also hope that the international community will continue to demonstrate its full engagement with Liberia by creating the conditions necessary to ensure the success of the forthcoming donor conference on the reconstruction of Liberia.

68. While significant progress has been achieved so far in the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone, much remains to be done to ensure that the planned gradual withdrawal of UNAMSIL from the country continues to take into account the Government's ability to assume its primary responsibility for internal and external security, to enhance control over natural resources and to consolidate civil administration throughout the country.

69. Several possible destabilizing factors have been identified as essential benchmarks for determining the timing and pace of the withdrawal of UNAMSIL from Sierra Leone. These include the possible return of Sierra Leonean ex-combatants from Liberia and a precarious situation in refugee and internally

displaced person camps. In order best to address the dilemma related to the drawdown of UNAMSIL and the still fragile peace in Sierra Leone, I intend to dispatch an assessment mission to Sierra Leone early in 2004 to evaluate the progress made in accomplishing the benchmarks that should guide the Mission's drawdown. In my next report to the Council on the drawdown of UNAMSIL, I will highlight progress made in meeting the benchmarks defined for the planned withdrawal of the Mission from Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, in the context of the regional approach to peace and stability, it is vital that UNAMSIL continue to monitor movements of armed elements along Liberia's borders in order to prevent incursions. This is particularly important at a time when UNMIL is preparing to launch the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

70. It is also worth noting that, in response to a request by the Council that missions in the region develop an effective contingency plan for preventing cross-border movements of foreign combatants and devise a mechanism to harmonize their activities in areas of mutual concern, UNAMSIL took the initiative to convene a meeting of United Nations missions in West Africa, which was held in Freetown on 14 November. The meeting, which was chaired by my Special Representative for West Africa, considered those cross-border and related issues and adopted specific mechanisms for harmonization among the United Nations missions in the subregion.

71. As members of the Council are fully aware, the cross-border issues identified by the Security Council mission to West Africa are at the core of instability in the subregion. In order to appraise the complexity and the multidimensional nature of those issues, my Special Representative for West Africa plans to draw from his ongoing consultations with the other United Nations political and peacekeeping presences in the subregion, as well as with other partners, substantive elements that could form part of a strategy to address those issues. Such a strategy would include the utilization and maximization of the comparative advantages of all the organizations concerned and the possibility of developing cooperative arrangements between them and the United Nations Office for West Africa. As indicated above, I will submit to the Security Council in the coming few weeks a report on cross-border issues with recommendations on practical ways of addressing them.